ORIGINAL EC COMICS FROM THE 1950s!

CRIME

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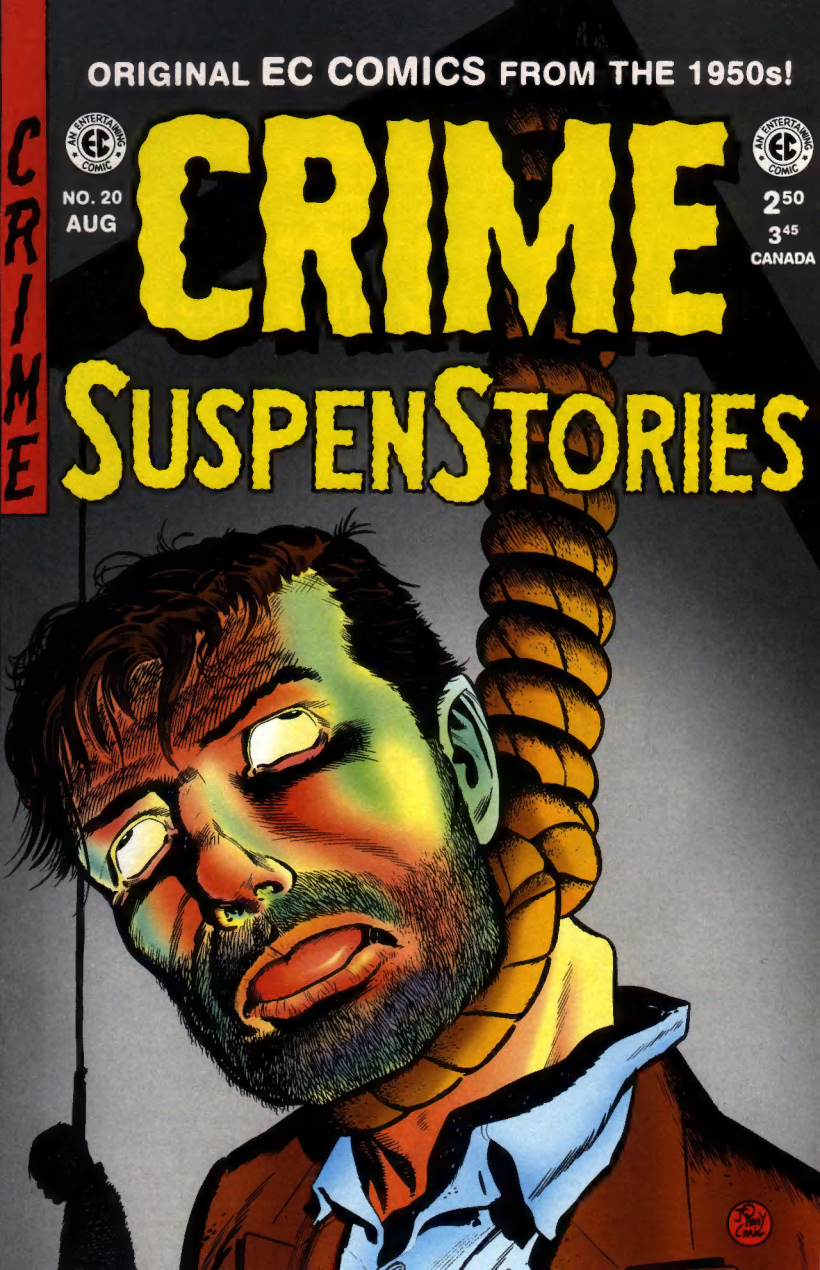

BACK ISSUES!!

THE COMIC YOU HOLD IN YOUR HANDS IS PART OF THE CHRONOLOGICAL, FACSIMILE REPRINTING OF THE **FAMOUS** (AND INFAMOUS!) **EC COMICS** LINE OF THE EARLY 1950s! WE STARTED WITH THE **FIRST ISSUE** OF EACH TITLE AND ARE ON OUR WAY TO THE **BITTER END!** GET ON THE BANDWAGON, AND **FILL IN THE GAPS** IN YOUR COLLECTION FROM THIS BACKLIST!!

CRYPT #1

CRYPT #2

CRYPT #3

CRYPT #4

CRYPT #5

CRYPT #6

W SCI #1

W SCI #2

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SHOCK #1

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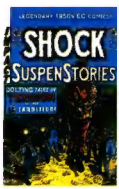

SHOCK #5

SHOCK #6

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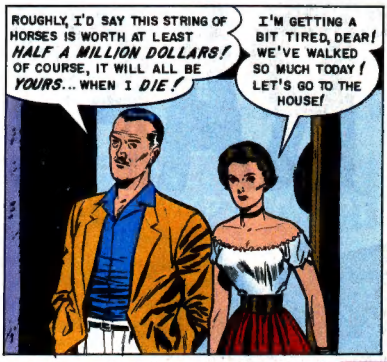
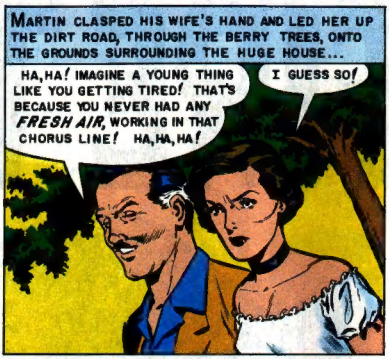
FIRE TRAP!

JOHNNY CRAIG
THEIR FABULOUS HONEYMOON WAS AT LAST ENDED, AND FOR THE FIRST TIME, MARTIN SIMMONS WAS SHOWING HIS NEWLY ACQUIRED WIFE THE IMMENSE ESTATE THAT WAS TO BE HER HOME...
... AND HERE ARE THE STABLES, GEORGIA. WE OWN SOME OF THE FINEST RACE HORSES IN THE COUNTRY!
HOW WONDERFUL! THEY MUST BE WORTH A GREAT DEAL OF MONEY!
1


ROUGHLY, I'D SAY THIS STRING OF HORSES IS WORTH AT LEAST HALF A MILLION DOLLARS! OF COURSE, IT WILL ALL BE YOURS... WHEN I DIE!
I'M GETTING A BIT TIRED, DEAR! WE'VE WALKED SO MUCH TODAY! LET'S GO TO THE HOUSE!


MARTIN CLASPED HIS WIFE'S HAND AND LED HER UP THE DIRT ROAD, THROUGH THE BERRY TREES, ONTO THE GROUNDS SURROUNDING THE HUGE HOUSE...
HA, HA! IMAGINE A YOUNG THING LIKE YOU GETTING TIRED! THAT'S BECAUSE YOU NEVER HAD ANY FRESH AIR, WORKING IN THAT CHORUS LINE! HA, HA, HA!
I GUESS SO!

THE COOLNESS OF THE HOUSE WAS SO PLEASANT... SO REFRESHING...
WHAT'S THE MATTER, EH, GEORGIA? DID I SAY...
FORGET IT, MARTIN. OH, LOOK! HERE'S A LETTER FROM MY BROTHER!

EXCITEDLY, SHE RIPPED OPEN THE ENVELOPE AND READ THE LETTER...
WHAT'S HE SAY?
OH, MARTIN! HE'S BEING DISCHARGED FROM THE ARMY! HE'S COMING HOME!

WHAT'S THE MATTER?
...BUT, MARTIN! I GAVE UP MY APARTMENT WHEN I MARRIED YOU! HE... HE DOESN'T HAVE A PLACE TO LIVE!

HMM... WELL, NOW... I GUESS WE'LL HAVE TO PUT HIM UP HERE! ONLY FAIR THING TO DO!
MARTIN, YOU'RE AN ANGEL! HE WON'T BE IN THE WAY, AND WE HAVE PLENTY OF ROOM! I KNOW YOU'LL LIKE HIM! IT'S GOING TO BE JUST WONDERFUL!

SEVERAL WEEKS LATER, GEORGIA'S BROTHER ARRIVED. HE WAS TALL, HANDSOME AND PLEASANT. MARTIN LIKED HIM IMMEDIATELY...
...SO YOU LIKE HORSES, EH, BILL? WELL, THEN, YOU'LL LIKE LIVING HERE! WE'LL HAVE A LOT TO TALK ABOUT!
WE SURE WILL! I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOUR STABLES!

FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS, BILL LIVED WITH MARTIN AND GEORGIA. HE HAD ENDEARED HIMSELF SO MUCH THAT MARTIN HAD PERSUADED HIM NOT TO LEAVE... BUT HAD MARTIN KNOWN THE TRUE SITUATION, HE MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN SO THOUGHTFUL! ONE NIGHT...

...MARTIN GOT A NEW HORSE TODAY, BILL! IT'S DOWN IN THE STABLE NOW! COMPLETELY WILD...*UNTAMED!*

YEAH, I KNOW! THEY CALL IT A *KILLER HORSE!*

WHEN WILL MARTIN BE BACK?

IN A SHORT WHILE, I SUPPOSE!

DO YOU THINK THE TIME IS RIPE?

DO *YOU?*

YES!

GOOD! I HAVE IT ALL FIGURED OUT! WHEN MARTIN RETURNS, I'LL LURE HIM DOWN TO THE STABLES, AND LOCK HIM IN THE STALL WITH THAT WILD HORSE! THEN I'LL SET THE STABLE ON *FIRE!*

RIGHT! IF THE HORSE DOESN'T KILL HIM, THE FIRE *WILL!* AND THEN THIS WHOLE SHEBANG WILL BE *OURS!*

EVERYONE *KNOWS* THAT HORSE IS CRAZY-MAD! THEY'LL CALL IT AN *ACCIDENT!* BUT YOU HAVE TO LEAVE HERE *RIGHT NOW!*

NEITHER GEORGIA NOR BILL HEARD THE FRONT DOOR OPEN AND CLOSE... AND THEY DIDN'T REALIZE THAT MARTIN HAD COME HOME AND WAS VERY INNOCENTLY HEADING DOWN THE THICKLY CARPETED HALL TOWARD THEM...

...REMEMBER, DARLING... YOU BE GONE WHEN I GET BACK! IF ANYONE FINDS OUT YOU'RE NOT REALLY MY BROTHER, THEY MIGHT GET SUSPICIOUS AND REALIZE THAT ALL THIS TIME WE'VE BEEN MMM...

STUNNED, MARTIN SLUMPED AGAINST THE WALL, THE REALIZATION OF HIS BETRAYAL SLOWLY, UNWILLINGLY SETTLING INTO JEALOUS FURY...
I'LL GO OUT THE BACK WAY TO THE STABLES! REMEMBER... YOU BE GONE WHEN I RETURN!

A FEW MOMENTS AFTER HIS WIFE HAD GONE, MARTIN, TREMBLING WITH RAGE, SNEAKED UP BEHIND BILL... A KNOTTED SILK SCARF IN HIS HANDS...

THE STRUGGLE WAS INTENSE, BUT MARTIN'S GRIP ON THE STRANGLING SCARF NEVER LOOSENED...

...AND IT WAS ONLY A FEW MINUTES BEFORE BILL GASPED FOR HIS LAST BREATHS OF AIR... AND DIED!

(PANT!) GOOD RIDDANCE! GOT TO... HIDE HIS... (PANT!) BODY! (GASP!) THE CELLAR! BURY HIM IN THE WINE CELLAR!

HIS CHEST HEAVING FROM THE EXERTION, MARTIN DRAGGED BILL'S LIFELESS BODY DOWN THE CELLAR STAIRS. HE GRABBED A SHOVEL AND HURRIEDLY BEGAN DIGGING...
...HAVEN'T TIME TO BURY HIM DEEP! AFTER I TAKE CARE OF GEORGIA, I'LL REALLY GET RID OF THEM BOTH!

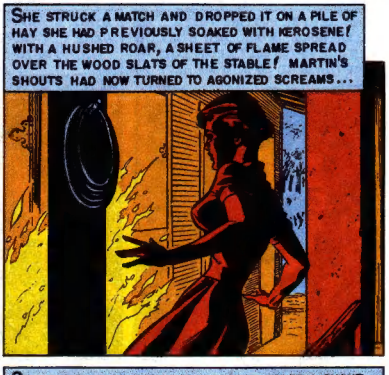
A SHORT WHILE LATER, MARTIN NEARED THE STABLES...
I'M SURE I HEARD HER SAY SHE WAS COMING HERE, BUT I DON'T SEE HER YET!

SAY... THE DOOR TO THE PADDOCK FOR THE NEW HORSE IS OPEN! AND THAT STALLION IS ACTING UP SOMETHING FIERCE! HMM... IS IT POSSIBLE THAT SHE'S IN THERE?

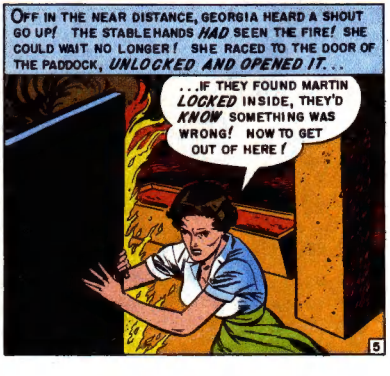
I TOLD HER THIS HORSE IS A KILLER! GEORGIA WOULD BE CRAZY TO GO IN THERE... BUT IF SHE DID...IT WOULD SAVE ME THE JOB OF KILLING HER! SO DARK... CAN'T SEE ANYTHING!

HEY!

QUICKLY, GEORGIA SLAMMED THE PADDOCK DOOR AND LOCKED IT! INSIDE, SHE HEARD THE FRANTIC SHOUTS OF HER HUSBAND AND THE SHRILL NEIGHING OF THE KILLER HORSE!
THAT HORSE WILL CRUSH HIM IN NO TIME! BUT I STILL HAVE TO SET THIS PLACE ON FIRE TO MAKE SURE!


SHE STRUCK A MATCH AND DROPPED IT ON A PILE OF HAY SHE HAD PREVIOUSLY SOAKED WITH KEROSENE! WITH A HUSHED ROAR, A SHEET OF FLAME SPREAD OVER THE WOOD SLATS OF THE STABLE! MARTIN'S SHOUTS HAD NOW TURNED TO AGONIZED SCREAMS...

SHE STOOD OFF FROM THE BLAZING PADDOCK, LISTENING TO THE PAIN-RACKED SCREAMS AS THE KILLER-HORSE, INCENSED BY THE SCENT OF SMOKE, TRAMPLED HER HUSBAND TO DEATH! SHE WAITED...
... CAN'T WAIT TOO LONG! THE STABLEHANDS ARE SURE TO HEAR ALL THE COMMOTION, OR SEE THE FIRE!


OFF IN THE NEAR DISTANCE, GEORGIA HEARD A SHOUT GO UP! THE STABLEHANDS HAD SEEN THE FIRE! SHE COULD WAIT NO LONGER! SHE RACED TO THE DOOR OF THE PADDOCK, UNLOCKED AND OPENED IT...
...IF THEY FOUND MARTIN LOCKED INSIDE, THEY'D KNOW SOMETHING WAS WRONG! NOW TO GET OUT OF HERE!

HARDLY HAD SHE HIDDEN IN SOME NEARBY BUSHES WHEN A GROUP OF STABLEHANDS RACED UPON THE FLAMING SCENE...

WHEW! I GOT OUT OF SIGHT JUST IN TIME! THE STABLEHANDS WILL BE ABLE TO PUT THAT FIRE OUT EASILY ENOUGH!

TOGETHER WITH BUCKETS OF SAND AND WATER, THE MEN BATTLED FURIOUSLY TO EXTINGUISH THE BLAZE...

MORE SAND! MORE SAND!

C'MON! GET THAT HORSE OUT OF HERE!

AH! THEY'RE PUTTING THAT KILLER-HORSE IN ANOTHER STALL, AND THE FIRE'S JUST ABOUT OUT! TIME FOR ME TO GO INTO MY ACT!

WHAT'S HAPPENED HERE? WHAT'S HAPPENED?!

JUST A FIRE, MRS. SIMMONS! WE'VE GOT IT LICKED THOUGH!

HEY! THERE'S A BODY IN HERE!

A BODY?! HOLY SMOKES!

GEORGIA KNEW THE SIGHT OF HER HUSBAND'S DEAD BODY WOULDN'T BE PRETTY, BUT SHE WAS TOTALLY UNPREPARED FOR THE GHASTLY, HORRIBLY BROKEN AND BLOODIED HULK THE STABLEHANDS CARRIED OUT...

SHE OPENED HER EYES TO FAMILIAR SURROUNDINGS AND STRANGE FACES. SHE STIRRED AND SAT UP...

WH...WHAT HAPPENED? WHO ARE YOU? I...I...

TAKE IT EASY, MRS. SIMMONS. I'M DETECTIVE SERGEANT NOLAN...POLICE DEPARTMENT! WE'RE HERE TO *HELP* YOU!

SHE REMEMBERED NOW! THE STABLEHANDS MUST HAVE NOTIFIED THE POLICE OF MARTIN'S DEATH! SHE WOULD HAVE TO BE CAREFUL...HAVE TO CONTINUE HER ACT...

...IT WAS *HORRIBLE!* THE STABLE MUST HAVE CAUGHT FIRE, AND WHILE MARTIN WAS TRYING TO FREE THAT CRAZY HORSE, IT MUST HAVE *TRAMPLED* HIM!

YES, MA'AM! PRETTY WILD HORSE, EH?

YES! IT WAS *DANGEROUS!* A REAL *KILLER!* MARTIN WARNED ME NEVER TO GO NEAR IT!

YES, MA'AM! WHERE WERE YOU WHEN IT HAPPENED?

ME?! WH...WHY DO YOU WANT TO KNOW WHERE *I*...I MEAN, IT WAS...IT WAS AN *ACCIDENT!* WHY...?

JUST ROUTINE, MA'AM! WE KNOW IT WAS AN ACCIDENT, BUT WE HAVE TO FILE A REPORT!

WHERE WERE YOU?

WHY...WHY, I WAS DOWN IN THE WINE CELLAR!

CAN YOU SHOW US JUST WHERE?

THERE WAS NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT! THEY *SAID* IT WAS AN ACCIDENT! SHE LED THE WAY DOWNSTAIRS TO THE DIMLY-LIT WINE CELLAR...

HERE WE ARE! I WAS DOWN HERE WHEN IT HAPPENED!

I SEE, MA'AM! AND WHAT TIME WAS IT THEN?

WELL, I NOTICED THE FIRE AS SOON AS I HAD GONE UPSTAIRS, AND THAT WAS TWENTY MINUTES AFTER NINE! I WAS DOWN HERE FOR ALMOST A *FULL HOUR* BEFORE THAT!

I SEE. WELL, I GUESS THAT'S ALL, MA'AM!

HEY, SARGE...

WHAT IS IT, GREENE?
GOT A FLASHLIGHT? THERE'S SOME KIND OF CLOTH STICKING OUT OF THE DIRT OVER HERE!

KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THIS, MRS. SIMMONS?
WHY...IT LOOKS LIKE...LIKE ONE OF MY SCARVES! BUT...I...
...AND THE DIRT IS FRESHLY DUG!

PULL IT OUT, GREENE!
OKAY, SERGEANT! HERE GOES!

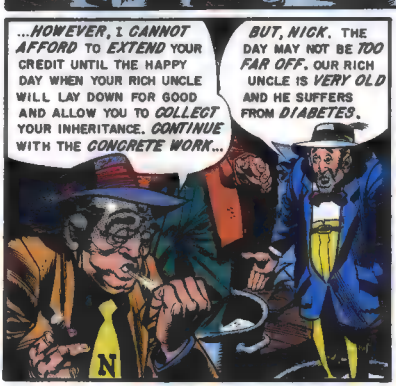
HOLY HANNAH! A BODY! AND IT'S STILL WARM!
WHO IS HE, MRS. SIMMONS?
IT...IT'S BILL! MY BOYFRIEND... NO! I MEAN... OH, I DON'T KNOW!

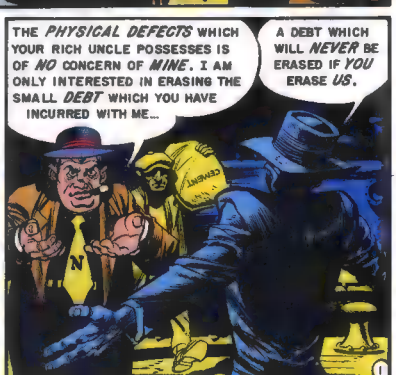
HIS WRIST WATCH IS BUSTED! AND IT STOPPED AT FIVE MINUTES TO NINE!
AND YOU WERE DOWN HERE AT THAT TIME! AND HE WAS KILLED WITH YOUR SCARF!
I...I...(SOB!) OH, NO!...I... I...I...

WHAT COULD SHE SAY? SHE KNEW NOW THAT MARTIN HAD MURDERED BILL, BUT HOW COULD SHE EXPLAIN WITHOUT IMPLICATING HERSELF IN THE PERFECT MURDER OF HER HUSBAND? SHE WAS TRAPPED!
ALL RIGHT, MRS. SIMMONS! I'M PLACING YOU UNDER ARREST FOR MURDER!
-THE END-

The WELCHERS

DO NOT GET ME WRONG. I DID NOT FEEL *SORRY* FOR HUMPHREY AND HORACE STONEHAM. I DID NOT GO *SOFT* IN THE *HEAD*. A OPERATOR SUCH AS MYSELF CANNOT *AFFORD* TO GO SOFT IN THE HEAD, ESPECIALLY TO THE TUNE OF *SEVEN THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS*. A *I.O.U.* IS A *I.O.U.* AND WHEN ONE *WELCHES* ON A I.O.U., ONE MUST BE MADE TO *PAY*, EVEN IF IT MEANS BEING STOOD IN A BUCKET AND HAVING CEMENT POURED INTO SAID BUCKET AND BEING DROPPED OFF A DESERTED PIER INTO THE RIVER. THIS PROCEDURE IS A *NECESSITY* SO THAT *OTHER* PONY-PLAYERS WHO HAVE WRITTEN I.O.U.'S WILL UNDERSTAND THAT ONE DOES NOT *WELCH* ON ONE'S *I.O.U.*, ESPECIALLY WHEN SAID I.O.U. IS ADDRESSED TO *NICK METROPOLIS*, WHICH IS *ME*...





LIKE I SAID, I DID NOT GO SOFT IN THE HEAD WHEN I ALLOWED HUMPHREY AND HORACE STONEHAM TO TALK ME OUT OF CEMENTING THEM INTO BUCKETS AND DROPPING THEM INTO THE RIVER. WHAT THEY SAID MADE *SENSE*...

ALL RIGHT. I WILL *TELL* YOU WHAT I WILL *DO*. I WILL GIVE YOU UNTIL *TOMORROW MORNING* TO ERASE YOUR DEBT...

TOMORROW *MORNING?*

BUT *HOW*... *COULD WE*...?

IT COULD BE VERY *EASY* TO ERASE YOUR DEBT. SIMPLY *ERASE* YOUR *UNCLE*...

ERASE...

OUR *UNCLE*...

DO NOT TAKE TOO LONG TO *DECIDE*, HUMPHREY AND HORACE. ALREADY THE CONCRETE IS *HARDENING*...

WE'LL...

DO IT...

IT IS NEEDLESS FOR ME TO SAY THAT HUMPHREY AND HORACE DEPARTED FROM THE DESERTED PIER POST HASTE WITHOUT EVEN LINGERING LONG ENOUGH TO REMOVE FROM THEIR SHOES AND SOCKS THE BLOBS OF DRYING CONCRETE WHICH ADHERED TO THEM...

REMEMBER, CHUMS. TILL *TOMORROW MORNING*...

WE WILL *REMEMBER*...

LEAVE US *HURRY*, HUMPHREY.

THE REST OF THIS SAD STORY I HAVE GLEENED FROM CONVERSATIONS I HAVE OVERHEARD. HORACE AND HUMPHREY MADE FOR THE NEAREST SUBWAY KIOSK AND, BETWEEN THEM, MANAGED TO SCRAPE UP ENOUGH CHANGE TO FINANCE A RIDE UPTOWN TO THEIR RICH UNCLE'S HOUSE...

HUMPHREY. I AM *TROUBLED!*

WHAT IS IT THAT *TROUBLES* YOU, BROTHER?

HOW ARE WE GOING TO MANAGE TO *ERASE* OUR DEAR UNCLE WITHOUT AROUSING THE SUSPICIONS OF THE *LOCAL LAW-ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS* SO THAT THE *DEED* WILL NOT BE PINNED UPON *US*?

THAT, BROTHER HORACE, IS A PROBLEM THAT TROUBLES *ME, TOO!*

WE WILL HAVE TO MAKE IT LOOK AS THOUGH A *HORRIBLE ACCIDENT* HAS BEFALLEN OUR DEAR UNCLE... SUCH AS PUSHING HIM DOWN A FLIGHT OF STAIRS, PERHAPS.

OUR DEAR UNCLE IS *BED-RIDDEN*, HORACE. YOU HAVE *FORGOTTEN*

IT WAS ALMOST MIDNIGHT WHEN THE BROTHERS STONEHAM EMERGED FROM THE SUBWAY IN THE HIGH CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD WHERE THEIR RICH UNCLE LIVED...
IT SEEMS TO ME THAT YOU ARE BEING ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT, HORACE. DURING OUR SHORT SOJOURN UPTOWN, I HAVE SUGGESTED SIX DIFFERENT WAYS TO ERASE OUR DEAR UNCLE.
ALL OF WHICH ARE SURE TO AROUSE SUSPICION.
THEN WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST!
LEAVE US WAIT UNTIL WE GET TO OUR RICH UNCLE'S HOUSE. PERHAPS WE WILL NOT HAVE TO ERASE HIM AT ALL...
PERHAPS IF WE TELL HIM OF OUR PLIGHT, HE WILL LEND US THE SEVEN THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS WE ARE SO ERNESTLY IN NEED OF.
NOW IT IS YOU WHO ARE FORGETTING, HORACE. UNCLE DOES NOT APPROVE OF IMPROVING THE BREED.
UNCLE STONEHAM RESIDED IN A SWANK APARTMENT BUILDING. HORACE AND HUMPHREY ATTRACTED NO LITTLE ATTENTION AS THEY ENTERED...
SAY, WHERE ARE YOU TWO BUMS GOING?
LEAVE US NOT BE CRUDE, MY GOOD MAN. WE ARE VISITING OUR UNCLE...
ALVIN C. STONEHAM, WHO IS RICH AND OLD AND SUFFERS FROM DIABETES...
HOLD ON A MINUTE. I'LL PHONE UP AND FIND OUT IF HE'LL SEE YOU...
HUMPHREY. YOU HAVE HIT UPON IT. DEAR UNCLE'S DIABETES. THAT IS HOW TO ERASE HIM.
I DO NOT FOLLOW YOU, HORACE.
HELLO, MR. STONEHAM? THERE'S A COUPLE OF CHARACTERS DOWN HERE WHO WANT TO SEE YOU. THEY SAY THEY'RE YOUR NEPHEWS...
I WILL EXPLAIN IN DUE TIME. MEANWHILE, LEAVE US CONCENTRATE UPON GAINING ADMITTANCE...
I HAVE IN MY POCKET A HARD BLACK RUBBER PURSUADER BY THE NAME OF JACK...
WILL WONDERS NEVER CEASE? THE OLD BOY SAYS TO SEND YOU TWO BUMS UP.
YOU MUST THANK HIM FOR SPARING YOU A NASTY LUMP UPON YOUR BILLIARD-BALL NOGGIN...
COME, HUMPHREY. TIME IS FLEETING...
3

IN THE ELEVATOR, HORACE EXPLAINED HIS PLAN...
UNLESS PROPER STEPS ARE TAKEN, DIABETES CAN BE FATAL. DIABETES IS THE INABILITY OF THE BODY TO ABSORB SUGAR. A SUFFERER MUST TAKE INSULIN INJECTIONS FOR DIABETES. INSULIN ABSORBS THE SUGAR THAT WOULD OTHERWISE KILL A DIABETIC...
THEN ...
THEN LEAVE EVERYTHING TO ME, DEAR BROTHER HUMPHREY. IN THE MORNING OUR DEAR UNCLE WILL BE DEAD AND NICK METROPOLIS WILL GET HIS SEVEN THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS...
...AS SOON AS WE INHERIT UNCLE'S MONEY, THAT IS!
CORRECT. NOW LIFT YOUR STUBBY LITTLE FINGER AND PRESS THE BELL, THEREBY SUMMONING UNCLE'S BUTLER WHO WILL WELCOME US...
I WILL SO DO, HORACE.
GOOD EVENING, GENTLEMEN. YOUR UNCLE AWAITS...
AFTER YOU, HUMPHREY.
A PLEASURE...
DEAR, DEAR, UNCLE!
HOW DO YOU FEEL, UNCLE?
HMMPH!
SINCE WE HAD NOT SEEN YOU IN SOME TIME, WE DECIDED TO PAY YOU A VISIT AND INQUIRE AS TO YOUR HEALTH...
S'MATTER, BOYS, GETTING ANXIOUS? WELL, NOW THAT YOU'RE HERE, AND I'VE GOTTEN A LOOK AT YOU, I'VE MADE UP MY MIND.
YOU NEEDN'T WORRY ABOUT MY HEALTH ANY LONGER. TOMORROW MORNING, I'M CUTTING YOU OUT OF MY WILL...
UNCLE!
YOU HAVE HURT US TO THE QUICKS.
4

I THOUGHT YOU'D LIKE THAT. AND NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I'LL HAVE JEEVES GIVE ME MY INSULIN SHOT AND I WILL RETIRE. ER... YOU'RE WELCOME TO STAY THE NIGHT IN THE GUEST ROOM...

THANK YOU, UNCLE...

YOU RANG, SIR?

MY INSULIN SHOT, JEEVES...

JEEVES FILLED THE HYPODERMIC WITH THE CORRECT AMOUNT OF INSULIN...

AND INJECTED IT INTO UNCLE STONEHAM'S ARM...

NEITHER JEEVES NOR UNCLE STONEHAM NOR HORACE FOR THAT MATTER NOTICED HUMPHREY PALM THE INSULIN BOTTLE...

IF YOU WILL EXCUSE ME I SHOULD LIKE TO RETIRE TO THE KITCHEN AND SECURE FOR MYSELF A GLASS OF WATER...

OH, DO WHAT YOU LIKE, HUMPHREY...

WHILE HUMPHREY WAS GONE, HORACE QUESTIONED HIS UNCLE...

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF JEEVES GAVE YOU *TOO MUCH* INSULIN, UNCLE STONEHAM?

I WOULD ENTER INTO A STATE OF INSULIN SHOCK AND PROBABLY DIE...

YOU'D *LIKE* THAT, WOULDN'T YOU, HORACE?

PLEASE, UNCLE. LEAVE US ACT *CIVILIZED*.

HUMPHREY CAME BACK FROM THE KITCHEN AND SLIPPED THE INSULIN BOTTLE, UNSEEN, BACK ONTO THE NIGHT TABLE...

WHEN DO YOU GET YOUR *NEXT* SHOT, UNCLE?

AT *SIX* IN THE *MORNING*, HUMPHREY. AND *DON'T* GET ANY *IDEAS*.

LATER, WHEN EVERYBODY WAS ASLEEP, HORACE SLIPPED OUT OF HIS UNCLE'S APARTMENT...

MY UNCLE IS RUNNING LOW ON INSULIN, MY GOOD MAN. DO YOU KNOW OF AN ALL NIGHT DRUG STORE?

TWO BLOCKS SOUTH, BUM!

AT SIX THE NEXT MORNING, HORACE WAS HIDING BEHIND HIS UNCLE'S DOOR WHEN JEEVES CAME INTO THE BEDROOM...
HORACE WATCHED JEEVES FILL THE HYPODERMIC WITH THE INSULIN ON THE NIGHT TABLE...
...AND INJECT IT INTO UNCLE STONEHAM'S ARM...
THEN, AFTER JEEVES HAD LEFT, HORACE CAME OUT FROM BEHIND THE DOOR WITH THE BOTTLE OF DOUBLE STRENGTH INSULIN HE'D PURCHASED THE NIGHT BEFORE...
HE TOOK THE HYPODERMIC AND FILLED IT WITH THE DOUBLE STRENGTH INSULIN...
...AND INJECTED IT INTO HIS SLEEPING UNCLE'S ARM...
THEN HORACE WOKE UP HUMPHREY...
COME, HUMPHREY! LEAVE US LEAVE!
IS HE DEAD YET?
THEY SLIPPED OUT THE DOOR, QUIETLY...
NO! BUT HE WILL BE!
YOU ARE SO RIGHT!
6

SO, LIKE I SAID, I DID NOT GO SOFT IN THE HEAD BY ALLOWING HORACE AND HUMPHREY TO ERASE THE DEBT THEY OWED TO ME...
GOOD MORNING, NICK! SO NICE OF YOU TO BE WAITING FOR US!
HAVE YOU TAKEN CARE OF YOUR DEAR UNCLE, CHUMS?
IF HE HAS NOT ALREADY PASSED AWAY, HE WILL DO SO SHORTLY!
AFTER ALL, EVEN CEMENT COSTS MONEY, SO WHY THROW GOOD MONEY AFTER BAD?
COME ALONG WITH ME, AND LATER THIS DAY WE WILL CHECK BY CALLING YOUR UNCLE UPON THE TELEPHONE.
THAT IS MORE THAN FAIR!
LEAD THE WAY!
BUT EVEN I, WHO AM A OPERATOR, WAS NOT PREPARED FOR A DOUBLE-CROSS FROM HUMPHREY AND HORACE.
HELLO. IS THIS THE STONEHAM RESIDENCE?
STONEHAM SPEAKING!
YOU WHO ARE HORACE AND HUMPHREY'S UNCLE ARE ALIVE?
I AM! AND I'VE CUT THOSE TWO BUMS OUT OF MY WILL! SAY, WHO IS THIS?...
LEAVE US TAKE A RIDE BOYS...DOWN TO THE PIER...TO WATCH SOME CONCRETE WORK. YOUR UNCLE IS ALIVE!
ALIVE!?
NO! HE CAN'T BE!
SO NOW, I AM WATCHING MY BOYS WHILE THEY POUR THE CEMENT INTO THE BUCKETS IN WHICH ARE STANDING HORACE AND HUMPHREY...
I CANNOT UNDERSTAND IT, HUMPHREY. I GAVE HIM A SHOT OF DOUBLE-INSULIN, RIGHT AFTER JEEVES GAVE HIM THE REGULAR MORNING SHOT. HE SHOULD HAVE GONE INTO INSULIN SHOCK IMMEDIATELY...
OH, NO!
AND NOW MY BOYS ARE CARRYING THEM TO THE PIER EDGE...
YOU SAID TOO MUCH SUGAR WOULD BE FATAL TO A DIABETIC, SO LAST NIGHT I SWIPED THE BOTTLE AND FILLED IT WITH A GLUCOSE SOLUTION IN THE KITCHEN. JEEVES GAVE UNCLE THAT THIS MORNING...
...AND...CHOKE...MY DOUBLE-INSULIN SHOT NEUTRALIZED IT...
...AND NOW THEY ARE DROPPING THEM INTO THE RIVER!
THE END.

CRIME·TIME

President and CEO—Stephen A. Geppi

Publisher—Russ Cochran

Dear CRIME,

Re: issue #18;

"Fall Guy for Murder" reads like a chess game, with enough twists and turns to keep a rat in a maze for a good long while. Bad wins out. Of course, the plan doesn't work if the detective simply takes the book, leaves, and reads it elsewhere; then it's the bad guy who gets "rooked."

"Juice for the Record!": Good wins out (as does justice). But good is not happy.

"Frozen Assets!" was good reading. Everybody loses – good and bad. In today's America, they'd just contest the will and lawyers would get most of the inheritance. Talk about creepy!

"From Here to Insanity" was exciting reading. Good wins out. She even gets a new door out of the deal. In the "confrontation" picture, the juxtaposition of the maniac's thumb to the officer's pistol makes it look like the gun is being discharged into the maniac, especially given the maniac's expression. You have to look twice. Of course, the great artwork of the EC comics always rewards closer examination during a second look.

Bob Gorby — Camarillo, CA

". . .good is not happy." (ie. = equivalent.) Sometimes you readers come up with cosmic verities.

Dear Russ,

CRIME #19: Wonderful art.

How many times did EC reprint stories such as "Murder May Boomerang" by Johnny Craig? It seems to me that it was a very rare occurrence.

A letter in this issue (#19) by Bob La Tremouille and your informative reply brought to the surface something that I was not aware of even though I've been researching EC and related material for four years. The matter I am talking about is all the different publishing companies connected with the EC titles such as Fables, I.C., L.L., Tiny Tot etc. First, how many publishing companies were there?, and secondly what was the reason for this? Is it related in any way with the crazy numbering system, to escape paying fees of some sort?

David Dellario — Kensington, CT

You are right, EC almost never reprinted stories (maybe 3 time in New Trend days, 3 times in PreTrend days). On the other hand, they ran a taut ship; very few titles total, no particular impetus to 'fill' books with anything on hand.

We don't have a handy reference (or speculation) on why EC was composed of so many individual incorporations. Your list plus two more seems to be the crop. See next letter for more info.

NEXT ISSUE

EC Staff,

CRIME 18 was truly an insane issue, in my opinion the most insane issue of any EC comic. I have a question concerning the letter column. In that column was a letter that contained the EC "Bloodline" which traces EC back to its earliest days. Were those comics distributed by the Gleason Company and were they dated bi-monthly like the ECs? I am making an EC list and would like to know the dates of the first issues of the following comics:

1) FAT AND SLAT. 2) INTERNATIONAL COMICS. 3) WAR AGAINST CRIME. 4) THE HAPPY HOULIHANS. 5) MOON GIRL AND THE PRINCE.

I would also like to know if these and other Pre-Trend comics have been or will be reprinted. Thanks,

Sean Hawkins — Spring Lake, NC

Without checking, we're thinking there was no joint distribution with Gleason (which would have been a rival publisher, not a distributor.)

M.C. Gaines' PICTURE STORIES titles were his first post-DC/AA projects, the first issues were distributed under DC and AA imprint. But they were presumably published and copyrighted by Educational Comics, for under that imprint (and seal) he reprinted and continued them by himself.

He added to his line (to be more attractive to distributors?) the following titles (and publishing companies):

TINY TOT (T.T., 1946)
LAND OF THE LOST (L.L., 1946)
ANIMAL FABLES (Fables, 1946)
BLACKSTONE (?, 1947)
DANDY (?, 1947)
FAT AND SLAT (Fables, 1947)
INTERNATIONAL COMICS (I.C., 1947)
ANIMATED (?, 1948)
HAPPY HOULIHANS (Fables, 1947)
MOON GIRL AND THE PRINCE (I.C., 1947)

Most had variable frequencies. A rundown of publisher data on later titles: CRYPT, I.C.; VAULT, L.L.; HAUNT, Fables; W SCI, Fables; W FAN, I.C.; W S-F/INCSF, Fables (except INCSF #32 and 33, GAINES); SHOCK, T.T.; CRIME, L.L., 2 FIST, Fables; FRONT, T.T.; PIRACY, I.C.; ACES HIGH, L.L.; PSYCHOANALYSIS, T.T.; EXTRA!, L.L.; VALOR, L.L.; M.D., Fables; IMPACT, I.C.; WAR AGAINST CRIME, L.L.; CRIME PATROL, I.C.; MODERN LOVE, T.T., A MOON, A GIRL...ROMANCE, I.C.; SADDLE ROMANCE, Fables; GUNFIGHTER, Fables; SADDLE JUSTICE, Fables; PANIC, T.T.; MAD (the comic), Educational Comic (we think they shortened it to E.C. with the first magazine-format issue).

Oh, yes; WAR AGAINST CRIME #1 was cover dated Spring 1948.

NEXT ISSUE

...AND YOU REMOVE THE AXE...

Also available this month are VAULT and WEIRD FANTASY. Watch for HAUNT, CRIME and FRONTLINE COMBAT next month. Don't forget CRYPT, WEIRD SCIENCE and PANIC! Get them at your local comic book shop or SUBSCRIBE (see our ad in this comic)!

BACK ISSUES: CRYPT #1, SOLD OUT; FRONT #1-4, $2 each; PANIC #1-2, $2.50 each; all others up thru issue #3, $1.50 each; CRYPT, W SCI & SHOCK #4-16, and VAULT, W FAN, 2FIST, HAUNT and CRIME #4-15, $2 each. All others, $2.50 each (Latest issues: CRYPT, W SCI, VAULT, W FAN, 2FIST, HAUNT & CRIME are up to 20; FRONT to 9 and PANIC to 2).

Don't forget the entire 11-issue run of WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY/INCREDIBLE SCIENCE FICTION (#1-3, $1.50 each; #4-11, $2 each) and the 18 issues of SHOCK SUSPENSTORIES (#1-3, $1.50 each; #4-15, $2.00 each; #16-18, $2.50 each)!

Add $5 per order ($10 outside US) for S&H.

We want MORE letters! Write to:
CRIME SUSPENSTORIES
GEMSTONE
POB 469
WEST PLAINS MO 65775

THIS COMIC REPRINTS
CRIME SUSPENSTORIES #20 (DEC 53/JAN 54)

COVER by Johnny Craig	
"Fire Trap!"	Johnny Craig
"The Welchers"	Jack Davis
"Double Jeopardy"	Jack Kamen
"Plane Murder"	Reed Crandall

We welcome letters of comment. We cannot promise to acknowledge, publish or answer letters. We edit for clarity, accuracy and length. We automatically withhold street address and zip code unless you clearly state you wish them published. We attempt to acknowledge publication of letters; to do so we need your address on the individual letter.

Klang! Bang! Thank you, man! Or, woman! Sex is not an issue on this page, we're an equal opportunity blow to the head employer. Erin Tinney, Los Molinos, CA, sends us this take on the fry pan scene in "Sink-Hole!", VAULT #5. Her skill, with a skillet made sure he won't complain about runny eggs again! Kitchen hints and household tips in THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S PAGE OF...

FINE ARTS #55

It's been a while since I've run a drawing by our old warhorse, Kurt Krause, Fountain City, WI. These two guys may have seen better days (in fact, that's almost a certainty), but they're looking good here in The Crypt.

–CK

More rhyming words for the yearning herds of poem fans throughout the lands. Now that I've set the tone, take it, Frank. . .

–CK

THE VAMPIRES

The vampires had a picnic.
(A bloody good affair).
They brushed off the mold,
Congealing in their hair.
A toast to life eternal,
(Wishing Renfield were there).
And counting on the Count,
For a blood type rare!

Frank X. Mattson — Spring City, PA

Send your contribs (not returnable, not too long, not too big, legible doublespaced text &/or bold black art. Warning...we edit) to:

THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S
PAGE OF FINE ARTS
GEMSTONE
POB 469
WEST PLAINS MO 65775

We welcome contributions. We cannot promise to return, acknowledge or publish contributions. We edit for clarity, accuracy and size. We automatically withhold street address and zip code unless you clearly state you with them published. We attempt to acknowledge publication; to do so we need your address on the individual contribution.

DOUBLE JEOPARDY

MY NAME IS GREGG SLATER. I LIVE IN HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA. I'M A SCRIPT WRITER FOR A BIG MOVIE STUDIO. BUT THE STORY I'M GOING TO TELL YOU IS FROM NO SCRIPT... IT'S NO FANTASTIC INVENTION OF A SCENARIO WRITER'S BRAIN. THIS IS *TRUE*. THIS *HAPPENED*. IT HAPPENED HERE IN *PHONY HOLLYWOOD*... WITH ITS *PHONY* SETS AND ITS *PHONY* BACKGROUNDS AND ITS *PHONY PEOPLE*. IT HAPPENED TO EDDIE MARTIN, THE *BIGGEST* PHONY OF THEM ALL. EDDIE MARTIN WAS A FORTUNE HUNTER WHO MARRIED NAN STANTON, ONE OF THE MOVIE COLONY'S MOST SUCCESSFUL ACTRESSES. NAN WAS COMPLETELY TAKEN IN BY EDDIE. SHE ACTUALLY BELIEVED HE LOVED HER. I REMEMBER HOW SHE USED TO TELL ME...

YES, NAN STANTON WAS MY KID SISTER. SO IT WAS ONLY NATURAL FOR ME TO FEEL PROTECTIVE TOWARD HER. I NEVER LIKED EDDIE MARTIN, EVER SINCE THE FIRST TIME NAN INTRODUCED US AND I SAW DOLLAR SIGNS SHINING IN HIS EYES INSTEAD OF LOVE LIGHT...

LIKE I SAID, EDDIE MARTIN WAS A PHONY. ONLY I GUESS *I* WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO SAW IT. NAN WAS BLINDED BY LOVE FOR HIM AND HER FRIENDS WERE COMPLETELY CHARMED BY HIS GOOD LOOKS AND QUICK WIT. BUT I KNEW, THE MINUTE I SAW HIM, THAT EDDIE MARTIN WAS MARRYING MY SISTER FOR HER *DOUGH*...

EDDIE SICKENED ME. I REMEMBER, AFTER HE AND NAN WERE MARRIED, HOW HE'D TRY TO CONVINCE US ALL OF HIS *DEVOTION*...HIS SINCERITY...

IF NAN AND I HAD BEEN AT *OPPOSITE ENDS* OF THE *WORLD*, WE *STILL* WOULD HAVE *MET* AND *FALLEN IN LOVE* AND *MARRIED*. IT WAS *FATE*. IT WAS *IN THE CARDS*...

ISN'T HE *SWEET*, GREGG?

HMMMPH...

I DON'T KNOW WHY I COULDN'T WARM UP TO EDDIE. I DON'T KNOW WHY I FELT THAT IT WAS ALL A CONCERTED EFFORT UPON HIS PART TO CONVINCE EVERYONE OF HIS LOVE FOR NAN... A PHONY SCHEME WITH SOME SINISTER PURPOSE. I DON'T KNOW WHY I FELT THAT WAY. BUT I COULDN'T HELP IT. ESPECIALLY WHEN HE WOULD BRAG...

NAN AND I WERE *MEANT* FOR EACH OTHER... EVER SINCE WE WERE *BORN*. WHY, I WOULD HAVE *CONTINUED SEARCHING* FOR HER *FOREVER*...UNTIL I *FOUND HER*...

HOW ABOUT SOME *CHARADES*, FOLKS.

MAYBE I'M A CYNIC. BUT WHEN GUYS SPOUT OFF LIKE THAT, CONTINUALLY, I JUST CAN'T HELP FEELING ITS ALL HOGWASH... A *COVER-UP*...

S'MATTER, GREGG! YOU LOOK DOWN IN THE *DUMPS*.

OH, *HELLO*, SID. SIT *DOWN*. *YEAH*. *I'M* DOWN IN THE DUMPS. IT'S THAT *BROTHER-IN-LAW OF MINE*...

IT WAS AT A PARTY GIVEN BY SID SHUBERT, NAN'S PRODUCER. SID AND I WERE GOOD FRIENDS...

WHAT'S *WRONG*, GREGG?

HE'S A *PHONY*, SID! *HE* DOESN'T *LOVE* NAN! I *KNOW* IT! HE'S AFTER HER *DOUGH!*

BUT ALL THOSE *THINGS* HE KEEPS SAYING...ABOUT *TRUE LOVE*... AND *FATE*...

HE'S *PAINTING* A *PRETTY PICTURE*, SID. HE WANTS US TO *BELIEVE* IT!

HE'S PAINTING HIMSELF AS THE *DEVOTED HUSBAND*...*MADLY IN LOVE*... *DISINTERESTED* IN NAN'S *FORTUNE*...ONLY INTERESTED IN *HER!* *IT MAKES ME SICK!*

BUT, *WHY*, GREGG? WHY DOES HE *CONTINUE* WITH IT? HE'S *MARRIED* TO HER *NOW!* HE'S *GOT* HER DOUGH...

SID HAD A POINT. IF EDDIE'D MARRIED SIS FOR HER DOUGH, WHAT WAS THE USE OF KEEPING UP THE SNOW JOB. UNLESS... UNLESS...

GOOD LORD, SID!

GREGG. YOU'RE *WHITE AS A GHOST!*

I FELT SUDDENLY COLD. AN ICY CHILL RAN UP MY SPINE. A WILD THOUGHT HAD COME CRASHING INTO MY SUSPICIOUS MIND...

GREGG! WHAT *IS* IT?

N-NOTHING, SID! I...I JUST *THOUGHT* OF SOMETHING!

I LOOKED INTO THE CROWDED ROOM AT NAN, BEAMING AT EDDIE. I WANTED TO RUSH TO HER AND TELL HER... TELL HER MY WILD THOUGHT...

I... I'VE GOT TO *CONVINCE* HER, SID! I'VE GOT TO CONVINCE HER THAT EDDIE'S A *PHONY*...

STAY *OUT* OF IT, GREGG! LEAVE 'EM *ALONE*. NAN'S *HAPPY* WITH HIM. THAT'S *ALL* THAT MATTERS.

I COULDN'T TELL NAN AND I COULDN'T TELL SID AND I COULDN'T TELL ANYBODY MY WILD THOUGHT. IT WAS ALL CONJECTURE... BUILT UPON SUSPICION... NOTHING TANGIBLE...

WHY, *I'D* HAVE KNOWN NAN *ANYWHERE!* IF YOU *BLINDFOLDED* ME AND LINED UP *TEN WOMEN*, I COULD *TELL NAN* BY HER *TOUCH*... HER *KISS*...

EDDIE'S VOICE DRIFTED OUT TO US ABOVE THE LAUGHTER AND THE TINKLING OF HIGHBALL GLASSES...

THAT'S *LOVE*... *TRUE* LOVE! *GO AHEAD! TEST ME.* LINE UP *TEN WOMEN. BLINDFOLD ME! I'LL PICK OUT MY WIFE!* JUST FROM A KISS...

SID!

SUDDENLY I GOT A BRAINSTORM. EDDIE'S BRAGGING HAD GIVEN ME AN IDEA...

SID! REMEMBER THAT *PICTURE* WE DID TOGETHER... *YOU* AND *ME* AND *NAN*... *LONG TIME AGO*... BEFORE WE HIT THE *'A' CLASS?*

SURE. *'AFRICAN PRINCESS.'* BOY, *THAT* WAS *ONE LOUSY SCRIPT*...

REMEMBER THAT *GIRL* WE DISCOVERED... THE ONE WE USED IN THOSE *TREE-SWINGING SCENES*...

YOU MEAN... WHY *SHE*... SHE WAS...

EXACTLY, SID! *LISTEN*...

YES, SIR. I'D PICK OUT MY DARLING *BLINDFOLDED!*

I WATCHED SID'S MOUTH SPREAD ACROSS HIS FACE IN A DIABOLICAL GRIN. *HE* WAS THINKING WHAT *I* WAS THINKING...

LATER, AFTER EVERYONE HAD LEFT THE PARTY, SID AND I DISCUSSED OUR PLAN...

IF IT *WORKS*, IT WILL *OPEN NAN'S EYES*, SID. AT LEAST SHE'LL *FIND OUT* HE'S JUST A LOT OF *TALK*... THAT IT'S ALL *SHAM*... *PHONY*...

YOU'RE PLAYING WITH *FIRE*, GREGG. YOU'LL BREAK HER *HEART*...

BETTER *NOW* THAN *LATER*, SID.

SUPPOSE NAN REFUSES TO GO ALONG WITH THE GAG?

I'LL TALK TO HER. I'LL GET HER TO AGREE. I KNOW NAN LIKE A BOOK, SID. AFTER ALL... SHE'S MY *SISTER!*

I COULDN'T TELL SID MY *REAL* REASON FOR DREAMING UP OUR LITTLE PLOT. I COULDN'T TELL HIM OF THE WILD THOUGHT I HAD HAD. HE WOULD HAVE CALLED ME *CRAZY*...

OKAY. *YOU* TALK TO *NAN*. I'LL LOOK UP THAT *DAME*... *WHAT* WAS HER NAME? OH, YEAH... *LILA REED!*

SWELL! I'LL LET YOU KNOW *WHEN*...

ABOUT A WEEK AFTER SID'S PARTY, NAN CALLED ME AT THE STUDIO...

EDDIE'S GONE OUT OF TOWN, GREGG. HOW ABOUT KEEPING YOUR LONELY KID SISTER COMPANY TONIGHT?

SURE, HON. I'LL BE OVER ABOUT EIGHT...

THAT NIGHT AT EIGHT I DROVE OUT TO MY KID SISTER'S BEVERLY HILLS MANSION. AS WE SAT ON THE REAR TERRACE, WATCHING THE MOONLIGHT RIPPLE OVER THE SURFACE OF THE SWIMMING POOL...

PHONE'S RINGING! EXCUSE ME, GREGG...

MAYBE IT'S EDDIE...

UNTIL THAT PHONE CALL CAME IN, I HADN'T GOTTEN UP ENOUGH *NERVE* TO ASK NAN TO *COOPERATE* WITH MY LITTLE SCHEME. BUT WHEN SHE CAME BACK TO THE TERRACE WITH THAT PUZZLED LOOK ON HER FACE...

S'MATTER, SIS?

THAT'S *FUNNY!* IT WAS *EDDIE!* HE'S *COMING BACK TONIGHT, AFTER MIDNIGHT*. HE SAID NOT TO *TELL* ANYBODY.

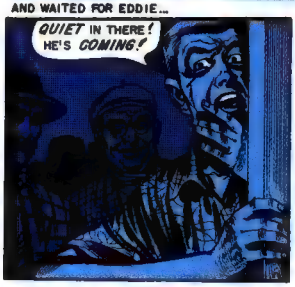
...MY WILD THOUGHT BEGAN TO POUND HARDER AND HARDER IN MY BRAIN...

DIDN'T YOU *EXPECT* HIM BACK TONIGHT, NAN?

NO! HE LEFT WORD THAT HE'D BE *GONE* FOR A *FEW DAYS*. *THAT'S FUNNY*...

TONIGHT! I'D HAVE TO PULL MY LITTLE SCHEME TONIGHT!...
BUT WHY ASK ME NOT TO TELL ANYBODY HE'S COMING BACK, GREGG?
SEARCH ME! LISTEN, SIS! I GOT A GREAT IDEA...
REMEMBER LILA REED...THAT GAL WE USED IN 'AFRICAN PRINCESS'?
HOW COULD I FORGET?!
WELL, SID SHUBERT AND I THOUGHT UP A GREAT GAG TO PULL ON EDDIE. NOW WHEN HE GETS HOME TONIGHT...
I TRIED TO MAKE THE WHOLE PLAN SOUND REAL GAY. I LAUGHED AS I TOLD NAN...
...AND THEN...WE ALL BUST IN WITH CAMERAS...AND FLASHBULBS POPPING... AND KID THE DAYLIGHTS OUT OF HIM...
HE'LL BE AWFULLY EMBARRASSED, GREGG!
IT'LL SERVE HIM RIGHT, SIS! THEN MAYBE HE WON'T GO BRAGGING ABOUT TRUE LOVE AND KNOWING YOU ANYWHERE, EVEN BLINDFOLDED...ANYMORE!
HE'D NEVER EXPECT IT! IT'D BE A COMPLETE SURPRISE. IT DOES SOUND LIKE FUN...
NAN WAS ALWAYS A GOOD SPORT. WE'D PULLED PLENTY OF GAGS ON HER THAT SHE'D TAKEN GOOD-NATUREDLY. SO SHE AGREED...
ALL RIGHT. WE'LL DO IT! CALL SID!
I'M ON MY WAY! GET OUT YOUR CAMERA COLLECTION AND HIS FAVORITE NIGHTGOWN.
IT HAD TO BE TONIGHT. EVERYTHING POINTED TO IT. EDDIE'S GOING OUT OF TOWN SUDDENLY...SAYING HE'D BE GONE FOR A FEW DAYS... TELLING NAN NOT TO MENTION HIS UNEXPECTED RETURN TO ANYONE. EVERYTHING POINTED TO THE FACT THAT MY WILD THOUGHT WAS BECOMING A REALITY...A REALITY THAT I COULDN'T LET HAPPEN...
HELLO, SID? GREGG! DIG UP LILA! YES! TONIGHT! EDDIE'S COMING HOME UNEXPECTEDLY! WE PULL OUR GAG TONIGHT. TELL THE REST OF THE GANG...

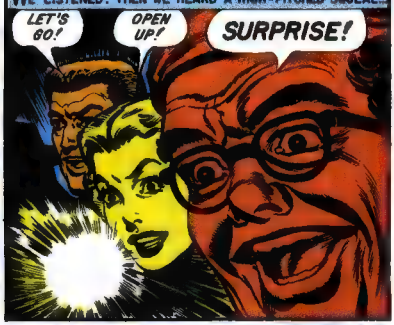
I REMEMBER HOW WE ALL CROWDED INTO NAN'S BEDROOM BATH AFTER MIDNIGHT WITH LOADED CAMERAS AND FLASHGUNS AND NOISEMAKERS FOR GOOD MEASURE, AND WAITED FOR EDDIE...



EDDIE CAME INTO THE DARKENED BEDROOM SLOWLY.

FROM THE BATHROOM, WE LISTENED TO THE MUFFLED SOUNDS IN THE BEDROOM BEYOND THE DOOR...

WE LISTENED. THEN WE HEARD A HIGH-PITCHED SQUEAL...



WE BURST OUT OF THE BATH, FLASHBULBS EXPLODING, NOISEMAKERS BLASTING. EDDIE *SURE WAS SURPRISED.* HE *FROZE*...KNEELING ON THE BED...THE *DRIPPING KNIFE* IN HIS HAND, UPRAISED, LIKE A MURDER-PICTURE STILL...THE LIFELESS BODY OF *LILA REED*, NAN'S *MOVIE DOUBLE*, SPRAWLED IN AN EVER-WIDENING POOL OF BLOOD...

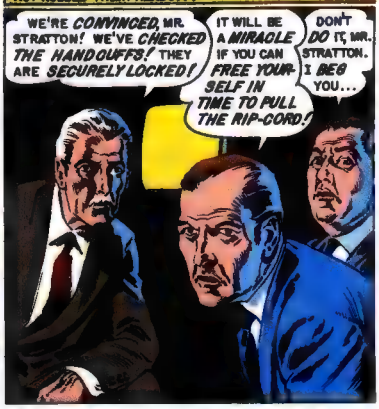
AS I SAID, THIS IS NO FIGMENT OF SOME SCRIPT WRITER'S *IMAGINATION*. IT *HAPPENED...HERE*... IN *PHONY HOLLYWOOD*. AND I'D *FORESEEN IT*. YES, EDDIE WAS GOING TO *MURDER NAN*, COME *HOME* IN A *FEW DAYS*, AND WE WERE SUPPOSED TO BELIEVE THAT SOME *PROWLER* HAD DONE IT. AS FOR *ME*, I *DON'T WRITE MUCH ANYMORE*. EVERY TIME I *LOOK* AT A BLANK PIECE OF PAPER, I SEE *LILA REED'S FACE*. BUT I *HAD* TO DO IT. IT WAS EITHER *SIS* OR *HER*. I *HAD* TO DO IT. WOULDN'T *YOU* HAVE DONE IT, *TOO?*

THE END...

Plane Murder

THEY WERE OVER THE FIELD NOW. PHIL STRATTON STOOD IN THE OPEN DOORWAY OF THE PLANE, LISTENING TO THE AIR ROARING BY HIM, LOOKING DOWN AT THE GRANDSTANDS JAMMED WITH PEOPLE, LIKE SO MANY ANTS. BELOW, OFF TO THE LEFT, AT THE END OF THE EAST-WEST RUNWAY, PHIL COULD SEE THE CHARRED WRECKAGE OF MARTY'S PLANE. MILDRED WAS DOWN THERE, TOO, WAITING FOR HIM, WAITING WITH OPEN ARMS, NOW THAT MARTY WAS DEAD. PHIL GRINNED. YES, EVERYTHING HAS WORKED OUT PERFECTLY. HE GLANCED AT HIS CHEST PACK, CLENCHED HIS HANDS THAT WERE HANDCUFFED BEHIND HIS BACK, AND ANNOUNCED...

BEHIND HIM, IN THE PLANE CABIN, THE MAYOR AND THE OTHER TOWN DIGNITARIES THAT HAD COME ALOFT WITH PHIL TO VOUCH FOR THE AUTHENTICITY OF HIS FAMOUS ACT NODDED THEIR HEADS...



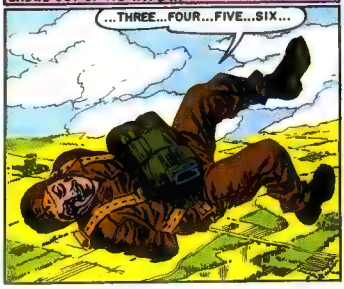
PHIL NODDED TO THE FIELD BELOW...

PHIL STEPPED INTO SPACE...

PHIL TUMBLED EARTHWARD, HEAD OVER HEELS, TURNING SLOWLY, GIDDY WITH THE SENSATION OF FALLING...

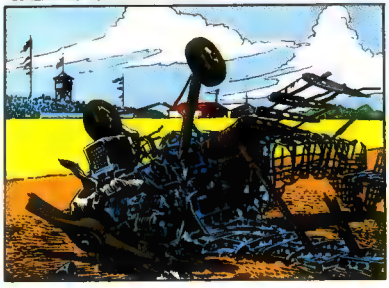
PHIL MANEUVERED THE KEY HE'D TAKEN FROM THE PLANE SEAT... THE KEY MILDRED'D HIDDEN BETWEEN THE CUSHIONS EARLY THIS MORNING... THE KEY HE'D PALMED WHILE THEY'D EXAMINED THE HANDCUFFS JUST BEFORE HE'D JUMPED...

PHIL GRINNED. HE BEGAN TO COUNT. ALWAYS WAIT UNTIL THE *LAST MINUTE*. THAT *SCARED* THE CROWD OUT OF ITS *WITS*...



FAR BELOW, IN THE SHADOWS OF THE CROWDED GRANDSTAND, MILDRED STRATTON WATCHED THE FALLING SPECK IN THE SKY GROWING LARGER... LARGER. SHE WATCHED WITH GRIM-SET MOUTH AND HARD COLD EYES...

AND THEN SHE LOOKED AT THE CHARRED WRECKAGE AT THE FAR END OF THE EAST-WEST RUNWAY... THE SILENT SCORCHED REMINDER OF YESTERDAY'S MOMENT OF HORROR WHEN SHE'D WATCHED MARTY MADISON DIE IN A SCREAMING ROARING INFERNO...



MARTY MADISON! MILDRED'S LIPS CURLED INTO A WISTFUL SAD SMILE. SHE'D *LOVED* MARTY... EVER SINCE THE *FIRST MOMENT SHE'D MET* HIM. HOW *LONG* HAD IT BEEN? ALMOST A *YEAR?* IT SEEMED LIKE ONLY *YESTERDAY* THAT HE'D WALKED UP TO HER AND ASKED...

...ONLY YESTERDAY THAT HE'D STOOD BEFORE HER...YOUNG AND STRONG AND HANDSOME IN A CLEAN FRESH WAY... SO UNLIKE PHIL, HER HUSBAND...

I'M LOOKIN' FOR A JOB, MA'AM. I'M A *STUNT* PILOT. I'D LIKE TO WORK IN MR. STRATTON'S *AIR CIROUS.*

PHIL, C'MERE *A MINUTE,* HUH?

JUS' A *MINUTE,* MILDRED.

WHAT'S YOUR *NAME,* HANDSOME?

MARTY, MA'AM! MARTY *MADISON!*

WHAT'S *UP,* MILDRED? CAN'T YOU SEE I'M *BUSY...*

PHIL, THIS IS MY *COUSIN MARTY.* HE'S LOOKING FOR A *JOB.* HE'S A *STUNT PILOT.*

OH? YOU NEVER *TOLD* ME YOU HAD A *COUSIN* WHO WAS A *STUNT PILOT,* MILDRED.

MILDRED REMEMBERED HOW SHE'D LAUGHED INNOCENTLY...

HOW *COULD* I, PHIL? I DIDN'T *KNOW* IT *MYSELF. LAST* TIME I HEARD FROM MARTY HE WAS IN THE *AIR FORCE.*

WHAT'D YOU *FLY,* MARTY?

A *P-47,* MR. *STRATTON.*

GIVE HIM A *BREAK,* PHIL. YOU COULD *USE* A GOOD STUNT ACT.

OKAY, MARTY. LET'S SEE WHAT YOU CAN *DO!* TAKE THAT CURTIS BIPLANE UP. SHE'S READY.

SURE THING, MR. STRATTON.

MILDRED REMEMBERED HOW'D SHE'D WATCHED MARTY TAKE THE CURTIS ALOFT AND PUT IT THROUGH ITS PACES...

SAY, HE'S *PRETTY GOOD,* MILDRED.

DON'T I *KNOW* IT...

AND SHE REMEMBERED, AFTERWARD...

WELL?

TERRIFIC, MARTY! YOU'RE *HIRED!*

MILDRED REMEMBERED HOW MARTY'D QUESTIONED HER AFTER PHIL'D GONE BACK TO WORK...

WHY'D YOU TELL HIM I WAS YOUR *COUSIN*, MILDRED?

I WANTED TO MAKE SURE YOU GOT THE *JOB*, MARTY. *BESIDES*, NOW PHIL WON'T ASK ANY *QUESTIONS* WHEN HE SEES US TOGETHER...

OH? WILL WE BE *GETTING TOGETHER?*

WHAT'S *WRONG?* DON'T YOU *LIKE* THE IDEA?

SURE, MILDRED. SURE I LIKE THE IDEA...

PHIL AND I HAVEN'T BEEN GETTING *ALONG* VERY WELL, MARTY. IT'LL BE NICE TO HAVE A *'LOVING COUSIN'* AROUND...

MILDRED REMEMBERED THE MONTHS THAT FOLLOWED, TOURING THE COUNTRY WITH THE AIR CIRCUS, AND PRAYING FOR MARTY EVERY TIME HE WENT UP...

DID YOU PUT THE *KEY* IN THE *SEAT*, MILDRED?

HUH? OH, *SURE*, PHIL. *SURE...*

AND SHE REMEMBERED WATCHING PHIL GO ALOFT IN HIS FAMOUS 'HANDCUFFED-PARACHUTE-JUMP ACT', AND WISHING HE'D *DROP* THE *KEY* SHE'D HIDDEN FOR HIM...

PENNY FOR YOUR *THOUGHTS*, HONEY!

CUT IT OUT, MARTY!

SHE REMEMBERED THEIR STOLEN MOMENTS TOGETHER... SHE AND MARTY...WHILE PHIL SLEPT...

I *LOVE* YOU, BABY.

OH, *MARTY*. IF I WERE ONLY *FREE...*

AND SHE REMEMBERED THE NIGHT PHIL'D DISCOVERED THEM IN THE DESERTED HANGAR...

PHIL!

GET BACK TO YOUR ROOM...

LISTEN, PHIL. WE *LOVE* EACH OTHER. YOU'VE GOT TO GIVE HER A *DIVORCE...*

SHE REMEMBERED HOW *FURIOUS* PHIL WAS...

AS SOON AS WE *FINISH THIS STAND*, YOU'RE *THROUGH*, MADISON. IN THE MEANTIME, *KEEP AWAY FROM MY WIFE.*

...HOW HE SHOUTED WHEN THEY WERE ALONE TOGETHER...

YOUR *COUSIN*, EH? *YOU LITTLE TRAMP*...

I *LOVE* HIM, PHIL...

WELL, YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO *FORGET* HIM. I'VE GIVEN HIM HIS *NOTICE*. WHEN WE *WIND UP* THIS WEEK-END, *HE'S LEAVING THE SHOW.*

I'LL GO *WITH* HIM, PHIL. I *SWEAR* IT.

MILDRED REMEMBERED HOW PHIL HAD SUDDENLY GROWN VERY SILENT... THEN SHRUGGED...

WELL... I CAN'T STOP YOU... IF *THAT'S* WHAT YOU *WANT TO DO*...

LET'S *BREAK CLEAN*, PHIL. LET'S NOT MAKE IT *MESSY GIVE ME A DIVORCE.*

ALL RIGHT, MILLY. WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT TOMORROW...

I KNEW YOU'D UNDERSTAND, PHIL. IT'S BEEN ALL OVER WITH US FOR A *LONG TIME*...ONLY *YOU'VE* BEEN TOO *PROUD* TO *ADMIT* IT...

MILDRED REMEMBERED HOW SHE'D FALLEN ASLEEP WHILE PHIL PACED THE FLOOR, SMOKING CIGARETTE AFTER CIGARETTE...

...AND BEING AWAKENED TOWARD DAWN AS HE CRAWLED INTO BED BESIDE HER, CHUCKLING SOFTLY...

AND SHE REMEMBERED THE NEXT DAY, TELLING MARTY THE WONDERFUL NEWS BEFORE HE TOOK OFF...

HE'S AGREED TO LET ME GO, HONEY!

SWELL, MILLY! I'LL SEE YOU WHEN I GET DOWN.

...WATCHING HIM TAXI OUT ONTO THE EAST-WEST RUNWAY WHILE THE LOUDSPEAKER DRONED, ANNOUNCING HIS ACT, AND THE CROWD CHEERED...

AND MILDRED REMEMBERED HEARING MARTY GUN THE BIPLANE'S ENGINE, SWEEPING DOWN THE RUNWAY...

...AND THE SUDDEN REALIZATION THAT THE PLANE WASN'T GETTING UP ENOUGH *SPEED*... WASN'T *LIFTING* FAST ENOUGH...

MARTY! MY GOD!

AND THEN... THAT HORRIBLE MOMENT WHEN THE PLANE STALLED SCARCELY FIFTY FEET UP AND NOSED DOWNWARD...

MARTY!

THE SICKENING SPLINTERING CRASH... THE SUDDEN LICKING FLAMES... AND MARTY'S SCREAMS...

YAAAAHHHH...

MARTY... MARTY...

AND LAST NIGHT, WALKING ALONE THROUGH DESERTED HANGERS, AND CRYING FOR POOR DEAD MARTY, AND OVER-HEARING THE GREASEMONKEYS...

I TELL YOU, *THAT PROP NEVER* COULD HAVE *LIFTED THAT JOB*. IF YOU ASK *ME*...*SOMEBODY SWITCHED 'EM*...

YOU *THINK* SO, SLUG? *WHO* WOULDA DONE A *THING LIKE THAT?*

CHOKE... *PHIL!*

MILDRED REMEMBERED HOW SHE'D TURNED AWAY, SICK AND ANGRY...AND HOW HER EYES HAD FALLEN ON THE CABIN JOB...THE ONE PHIL WOULD USE IN THE MORNING...

AND SHE REMEMBERED HOW, JUST A FEW MINUTES BEFORE, SHE'D WATCHED THE MAYOR SNAP THE HANDCUFFS ON PHIL'S WRISTS WHILE THE CROWD SAT IN SUSPENDED SILENCE...

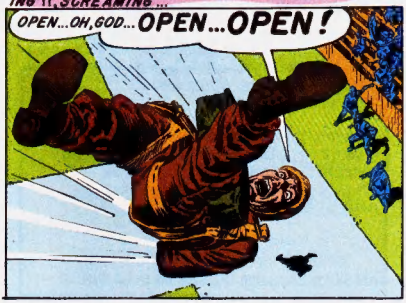
IT WAS ALWAYS LIKE THAT... WHATEVER BERG THEY'D PLAY. PHIL WOULD TAKE SOME BIG-SHOTS ALONG TO SEE THAT THE HANDCUFFS WEREN'T REMOVED WHILE ALOFT. AND HE'D SIT THERE, GRINNING AT THE SUCKERS, WHILE HE'D LIFT THE KEY FROM BETWEEN THE SEAT CUSHIONS

MILDRED'D THOUGHT OF NOT HIDING THE KEY THERE AT ALL. BUT SHE'D DISCARDED THE PLAN. PHIL'D JUST REFUSE TO JUMP. AND NOW, SHE WAS STANDING IN THE SHADOWS OF THE GRANDSTAND, WATCHING PHIL'S TURNING TWISTING BODY HURL EARTHWARD...

...AS PHIL FINISHED COUNTING...

...HE TURNED THE KEY IN THE HANDCUFF LOCK...

NOTHING HAPPENED! HE STRUGGLED WITH IT, TURNING IT, SCREAMING...



MILDRED TURNED AWAY AS THE CROWD GROANED AND THE FALLING BODY SPLATTERED UPON THE EAST-WEST RUNWAY. SHE WALKED UP TO A POLICEMAN...

YES. JUST AS PHIL HAD SWITCHED PROPS ON MARTY, LETTING HIM TAKE OFF WITH THE WRONG ONE, MILDRED HAD SWITCHED KEYS ON PHIL... LETTING HIM JUMP WITH ONE THAT COULD NEVER HAVE OPENED THE CUFFS!

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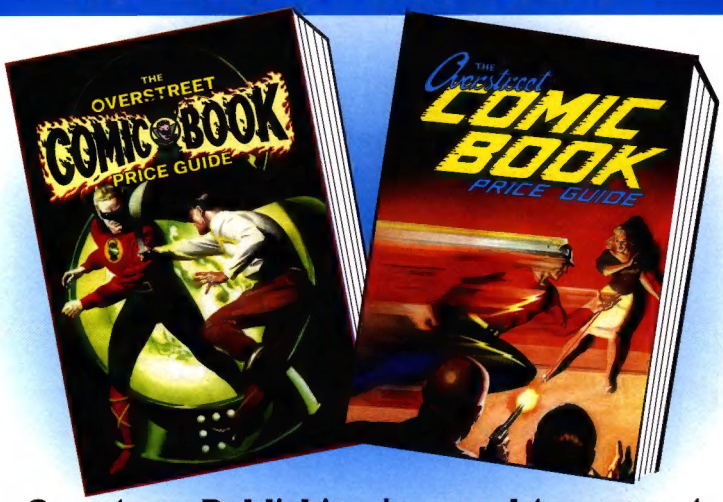

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